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SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR THE PREPARATION
OF BRANCH HISTORIES OF OSS

I. Statement of the General Problem

Your history should begin with a short exposition of the nature of the problem with which your Branch was created to deal. For example, how do you define your Branch, not as a branch of OSS, but as a job to be done? Then the following questions should be answered:

A. What in brief was the experience, in dealing with this problem, of:

1. Other United States agencies in this war, or of US agencies during World War I?
2. Britain and other Allied countries?
3. Of enemy countries?

B. Why did the OSS tackle the job? Was it because:

1. Of an obvious need not met by other agencies?
2. Of the inadequacies of other agencies?
3. As a service to other activities within OSS?

II. Establishment and Organization of your Branch

1. Date of organization.
2. To what extent was the activity of your Branch handicapped by starting late?
3. To what extent was your Branch able to draw upon past experience
 - a) in the United States?
 - b) In Britain and other Allied countries?
 - c) in enemy countries?

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4. Names and qualifications of personnel.
5. Initial problems of liaison.
6. First arrangements for setting up field work.
7. If it was set up in the time of COI, give some idea very briefly of how it differed from what it has become in OSS.

III. Operational History of your Branch to 1 September 1944

This section will narrate the events of your branch since its establishment. This might be subdivided into chapters or sections, one chapter for each important phase of your Branch's development. Thus, you might end one section of your narrative at 13 June 1942 (setting up of OSS). R&A, for example, might choose to write a section of its narrative history beginning with 13 June 1942 and ending with the reorganization which took place in January 1943. Perhaps there emerged some powerful committee or planning group in your Branch, around which it would be appropriate to integrate that part of your Branch's history. The Projects Committee of R&A, for example, is such a body.

Among the topics which you might appropriately treat are:

1. The reasons for such reorganizations as may have occurred.
2. Vicissitudes in morale and reasons therefor.

3. Tendency, or absence of, to harden procedures into channels, with an estimate of the effect of this upon the operations and esprit of your branch.
4. Relations with other branches of OSS.
5. Relations, whether collaborative or competitive, with other US agencies.
6. Relations with agencies of Allied nations, particularly with British agencies.
7. Activities discontinued by or transferred from your Branch in the course of time.
8. Changes in Policy resulting from personnel changes, in Branch or Section heads.
9. Instances of personnel being lent to other agencies.
10. Military citations or special commendations of personnel.
11. Casualties.
12. What persistent or recurrent difficulties did your Branch experience in carrying out its activities? For example, did you have difficulties in getting the right man? Did you have obstacles to overcome in dealing with higher echelons.
13. What areas of disputed jurisdiction, either between your Branch and other Branches, or between parts of your own internal organization, for a time caused confusion and inefficiency?

IV. Appraisal

What have been the achievements and the conspicuous successes of your Branch? Give specific instances, including the names of persons particularly worthy of commendation. Conversely, suggest the causes for (1) ineffectiveness, (2) deficiencies, (3) mistakes, and (4) failures. Inasmuch as one of the principal reasons for writing an OSS history is to produce an objective document which will suggest, in future similar contingencies, how to avoid the repetition of mistakes, our duty is to analyze dispassionately and avoid unmitigated hymns of praise.

Specifically, in appraising the accomplishments of your Branch, you should consider the following questions:

1. Was the original idea a sound one?
2. Were the concrete objectives wisely selected?
3. Was the type of organization elaborated to deal with the problem the best one? If not, why not?
4. Could the job have been better done some other way or by some other agency?

If you can secure any appraisal of the work of your Branch from sources outside the Branch, and particularly from sources outside OSS, you should not fail to do so.

V. General Comments

Do not feel limited by the questions listed above. They are intended to stimulate rather than confine you. If others occur to you as being relevant, by all means explore them. For example, your experience may have given you some theories as

civilian personnel (or vice versa) for specific jobs, and so on. If so, support them with specific examples of failures and successes.

In general, try to prevent your history from becoming too dryly constitutional and organizational. Remember that documents, although indispensable in recording decisions, rarely record the motives which shaped the decisions. Furthermore, by personal interviews with some of the oldest living inhabitants try to recapture something of the spirit of zestfulness and adventuresomeness which entered into the formative days of OSS and try to think of your Branch as something which has a sort of life history of its own, and has therefore been actively engaged in self-development and in adaptation to its environment.